

# faith in **focus**

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Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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"You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up". Deut 6:7

See pages 3-7

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## Editorial

As the keen readers of this magazine start flicking through the contents of this issue, it will become apparent to them, that there are a couple omissions. "World in focus" has been dropped (only for this issue), and our regular contributor Sally Davey has been on holiday. However, these omissions(?) have made way for some interesting articles.

This month marks the 500th year since the birth of John Calvin. Many reformed magazines have dedicated a lot of space to articles about Calvin. I suppose *Faith in Focus* is the exception to the rule. We haven't dedicated any space this year for "anything" Calvin until now.

We start off with guest contributor Rev John Westendorp, who writes on Calvin and Gender. This article addresses two things – the birthday of Calvin, and, the theme for this issue, "Preparing for a life of service". The second article is "Heart to heart" by Rev John Haverland. Both articles point out the necessity of parents (and fathers in particular) to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, which can only be done with lots of effort, and a godly example. It's not possible to cover all the aspects of godly parenting, but, there are some very good points made in these articles, such as headship, leadership, fathers and their responsibilities, training of the heart, etc.

Mr Andy van Ameyde reviews "Boyhood and Beyond; Practical Wisdom for Becoming a Man", and Mr Erik Loots reviews "Thoughts for Young Men". Two good follow-on book reviews to our first two articles.

We hear all about our ministers' and their wives' at the triennial Ministers' and Wives' Conference reported by Rev Andre Holtslag.

Rev John Rogers shares with us the address that he gave at the "Conference on Reformed Identity Worldwide", hosted by the Reformed Churches of South Africa. It's an enjoyable read with a good overview of the history of the RCNZ. I recommend reading it.

"The story around the shipping container TRLU 3612795" by Carl Larsen and Missions in Focus by Susan Larsen, go back to back, to give us some good insight into what is happening in the Solomon Islands, and how the RCNZ has contributed through the National Diaconate. Susan will be commissioned by the Reformed Church of Wellington to work in the Solomon's.

### Photo Credits:

Cover – Arjen Buter, and his two sons Jan and Dave (members of the Reformed Church of Dovedale), by Sally Davey.

Page 13 picture of the Reformed Church of Hamilton, by John Holtslag.

*However many blessings we expect from God,  
His infinite liberality will always exceed all our  
wishes and our thoughts.*

**John Calvin**

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

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# Happy birthday Uncle John...!

Preparing for a life of service (1)

## Calvin and Gender

### John Westendorp

When we're very young, birthdays are hugely important and parents generally help their little ones to celebrate them in style. We do come to a certain age, however, when we don't get too excited about birthdays – and that's about the stage I am at. I don't really care to be reminded that I'm another year older. By the same token I've noticed that many who get to be in their nineties again celebrate birthdays with much enthusiasm. Wow! Made it to ninety-five...! That would make a five-hundredth birthday something really worth celebrating. For us as Reformers we have such a birthday on July 10<sup>th</sup> – on that day Uncle John Calvin would have turned 500 if he was still alive.

I suspect that today there would be many voices telling us that this is a birthday worth forgetting. Western society at large has been far more interested this year in the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Charles Darwin than in the 500<sup>th</sup> birthday of John Calvin. There is no doubt that both men have left a huge legacy. The big question is whether it has been a good legacy. In Darwin's case it has been a legacy that has driven much of modern science into an atheistic direction. In Calvin's case it has been a legacy that has continued to promote a strong Christian world-and-life view.

### Notable achievements

There is much that one could write about Calvin. One could focus on Calvin the preacher or Calvin the theologian, Calvin the statesman or Calvin the pastor. Under all of those headings we could list some notable achievements. In my Catechism class last week we were talking about Calvin's influence in the city of Geneva. I shared with the class something I had read about the Plague in Europe and how it had a less devastating effect in Geneva than some of the surrounding cities. In some places the arrival of the plague was met by religious processions

through the streets to try to ward off the malicious destroyer. Calvin's Geneva got busy and improved their sewerage and waste disposal systems. My students were fascinated that this was the more Biblical way to go because in the Mosaic Law God expresses His will even concerning sewerage disposal (Deuteronomy 23:12,13). Arguably, one of Calvin's proudest civic achievements was the building of a closed sewer system in Geneva. It is evidence of his teaching that a biblical faith has implications for all areas of life.

One of the more controversial issues



John Calvin

today would be Calvin's view on gender. Measured by that standard, many today would be very keen to dismiss Calvin altogether as a male chauvinist. As I write this I've just been catching up on a current debate on this matter. It is an issue that is especially relevant in our society with its confused views of gender that virtually wants to limit matters of gender to certain bodily appendages – or lack thereof. It's also especially relevant for this issue of *Faith in Focus* that has to do with character building and especially with the role that fathers play in that, with regard to their children.

### Ambiguous about gender?

Calvin could easily be accused of sexism and of treating women as inferior human beings. Feminism would have huge problems with Calvin at this point. We, on the other hand, might try to defend him by referring to him as a child of his times and one who was part of a strongly patriarchal society. It's not quite that simple however. Many of those who have written about Calvin's view on gender in general and on women in particular, have found Calvin somewhat ambiguous. Was he in favour of equality between the sexes or was he promoting some sort of subordination of women?

There are certain statements in Calvin that, if taken on their own would lead one to conclude that Calvin was strongly in favour of subordination. So, for example, Calvin, in a sermon on Job, says *"Men are preferred to females in the human race. We know that God constituted man as the head and gave him a dignity and pre-eminence above that of the woman... It is true that the image of God is imprinted on all; but still woman is inferior to man."* Such statements would particularly rile today's feminists. Calvin even spoke of women having the image of God to a lesser degree than men. That raises questions, not just for the feminists, but for all of us.

### Image of God

At the same time we find in Calvin some statements that are surprisingly broad for someone from that period of time. He upholds the honour of women in the home and their equal rights, for example, to divorce an adulterous spouse.

Dr. C.J.Carrigan ([www.ontruth.com/index.html](http://www.ontruth.com/index.html)) has noted some attempts to resolve the ambiguity in Calvin on this score, and to understand how he views the respective roles of men and women. One of the more intriguing issues at this point of the debate is just what Calvin meant by 'the image of God' in human beings. Carrigan points out that a case can be made for Calvin

viewing the 'image of God in two different ways'. In a spiritual and general way the image of God is carried by all human beings – both male and female. Nevertheless, in the sense that man is called to give leadership in the home and is held responsible by God for the way he exercises that headship in the family, one could argue that at least in this sense men carry the image of God

pleads for headship to be loving, Christ-like leadership.

All of this has some interesting ramifications for the whole matter of character building and men's roles in nurturing character development in the next generation.

Men have too often reneged on their leadership responsibilities. Over the years as a pastor I have had Christian women

– both with respect to the male-female roles in marriage (Ephesians 5) and the role of fathers in the nurture of children (Ephesians 6). The point is that both of these Scripture passages are important for the Christian home. Men need to show loving spiritual leadership in a marriage and they need to show that leadership too when it comes to child-raising.

“Men have too often reneged on their leadership responsibilities.”

in a way that is not true of women. This is not an unimportant issue because at the end of the day the issue is that Christian marriages reflect something of the relationship between Jesus and His church.

#### **Calvin the pastor pleads for headship to be loving**

Having said that Calvin in this sense does teach submission and headship, I am also impressed with the way Calvin writes about matters of gender with pastoral gentleness and care. In his explanation of the respective roles of men and women in Christian marriage in Ephesians 5, Calvin in his commentary, guards against a tyrannical interpretation of male headship. Calvin the pastor

lament to me that if they don't provide leadership in the home it just doesn't happen. This is what has often been called: the *Adam Syndrome*. It goes all the way back to Genesis 3 where Adam allowed his wife to face up to the devil while he stood there beside her with his thumb in his mouth.

#### **Men need to show leadership**

Of course it is equally true that I have spoken to many frustrated men who have tried to give good leadership in the home but who have been thwarted in that by wives who must have suffered from a complementary *Eve Syndrome*, which seeks to take over and control.

I've found it helpful to read again Calvin's commentary on Ephesians

#### **Lack of models/mentors**

In the matter of character building in our children this becomes doubly important. Many Christian men have been unable to give spiritual leadership in the home because they neither saw it modelled in their fathers nor were they taught it and in that way prepared to provide such godly leadership in the home.

Allow me to take this one step further. This also has a huge impact on the church today. Increasingly we are finding it difficult to find suitable men to serve as elders and deacons. Is that any wonder when we have a leadership crisis in so many of our homes? Fathers ought to be busy building character in all their children. However, for their sons that needs to include teaching them to become godly young men who can give loving leadership in their homes and loving leadership in the church of Jesus Christ.

Of course much of this goes against the sexual egalitarianism of contemporary society. It is counter-cultural. When I understand what Calvin taught about men and women in this way then I see it as a good reason for a birthday party to celebrate Uncle John's five-hundredth birthday.

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## These hands ...

These hands will do the moulding of soft and supple clay: infants to us entrusted need moulding day by day

These hands convey directions from loving human mind yet they express reflections of sinful humankind

So may these hands be folded oft seeking for to pray that little minds be moulded and shaped by God each day

These hands ...

Wellington, August 2008



**Postscript:** In closing, just a word of explanation. Some of our readers may be wondering about the label I've given Calvin in the heading of this article. It's not meant to be a put down of the famous Reformer; it's rather a term of endearment. I have learnt much from Calvin over the years. I've read his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and I have often referred to his commentaries. I find in Calvin a kindred spirit. I belong to the same church family. I like to think of him as 'my kindly uncle, in Christ'.

*Rev John Westendorp has served four different congregations in the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia since 1976, and has recently completed a second four-month stint of ministry in Christchurch.*

# Heart to heart

Preparing for a life of service (2)

## The great task of parenting

**Rev. John A Haverland**

Today, as I begin writing this article, is a Monday. Yesterday I had the privilege of baptising our first grandchild, Roelof John, born to Roley and Joanna Voschezang. Harriet and I have new titles – we are Oma and Opa! Someone reminded me that the birth of your first grandchild immediately bumps you up another generation (even though I don't feel any older than I did before his birth). Someone else has observed; "If I knew having grandchildren was so much fun I would have had them first!"

I mention our first grandchild, not to sneak in some free advertising, but rather because his birth has given Harriet and me a lot to think about: the baton of parental responsibility has been passed on to the next generation, and the promises of God's covenant are now applied to our grandchildren.

When our first child was born others told us that the years of raising our children would go by very quickly. That has certainly been true. Today I received an email from my youngest brother who also mentioned this as well; his oldest daughter is now 13 and he reflected on how rapidly these years have passed. As a pastor I often discuss this with young couples when I visit them prior to the baptism of their children. I want to impress on them the importance of making the most of these years of raising their children.

All this brings me to the subject of this article, which is about parents preparing their children for a life of faith and service to the Lord. This is the great task of parenting. There are many other things we want to see our children achieve and do, but none are as important as this. We may want them to achieve excellent grades at school and university, to reach a high standard in musical accomplishment, to excel in their area of sport, to do well in drama, or art, or in their trade. If, however, they reach the pinnacle in any one of these fields, but fail to know the Lord, it would count

for nothing. Their eternal wellbeing is all important and that must be the focus of our attention.

### A word to fathers

I address this especially to fathers. If you are a mother or a solo mother, please don't turn the page to the next article; the same parenting principles apply to all of us. Yet the Lord has given the father the position of being the head of his family. It is up to us to ensure that we raise our children faithfully according to a biblical pattern. This does not mean that we have to do it all on our own; but if it does not happen we bear the primary responsibility for this failure.

For a long time, under the influence of radical feminism, the role of the father in the family was minimised. Thankfully, the pendulum is swinging back the other way. At this time a lot of attention is being given to the vital role fathers have in the lives of their sons and daughters. Both Christian and non-Christian writers recognise that both parents, including fathers, need to contribute to the development of their children. Failure by a

father or mother will have a detrimental effect on their family. How then should we raise our children?

### Aim at the heart

When the editor asked me to write on this subject he suggested I refer to Deuteronomy Chapter 6:4ff. I am glad to do that because this passage is my all-time favourite for the instruction of our children! The Jews refer to this as the *Shema*, which comes from the first Hebrew word meaning, "hear". Moses called Israel to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Some 1500 years later Jesus quoted this verse as the first and greatest commandment in the law. (Matt 22:34ff) This law must be on your heart as a parent. You cannot truthfully impress it on the hearts of your children if it is not on yours. (Deut. 6:7) The commands of God must *begin with us* and *then* be passed on to our children.

As you teach and train your children you are aiming at their hearts. Solomon addressed his son and urged him; "Give



me your heart, my son..." (Prov. 23:26) The heart in the Bible is the centre and core of our being; it is the source of our thoughts, feelings and emotions; it is the control-room for the rest of our lives; everything issues from the heart. Ted Tripp brings this out in his excellent book, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. He points out that as parents we are not merely seeking to produce outward conformity to certain standards so that our children do what is right because of our external pressure; rather our aim is to see them believe in the Lord and obey his commands *from their hearts*.

Take these commands of the Lord and "Impress them on your children." (Deut. 6:7) The ESV and NASB read; "teach them diligently", which means you must set yourself to this task and then keep at

Maybe they hardened their hearts. Or could it be their fathers did not teach them diligently? Did their fathers ask them questions to make sure they were listening? Did he reinforce the truth by explanation and impress it on them with application?

Family devotions must not be a merely mechanical exercise where we go through the motions so we have fulfilled our parental duty. Rather, seek to use the Scriptures to speak from our hearts to the hearts of our children.

### All of life

Formal instruction, such as family devotions and catechism training, is of great value but this needs to be supported by *informal* instruction. Moses urged the parents of Israel to talk about God's

“Turn off the television and use the mealtime to converse with your children, discussing what is going in their lives.”

it, doing it faithfully and regularly. This is your particular responsibility as fathers; your wife can assist you in this but it is up to you to see that it happens.

### Family devotions

One of the most effective means of teaching our children is through family devotions. Often, as Christian families, we structure these around our meal-times, especially the evening meal. It concerns me that increasingly, even in Christian homes, families have their meals in front of the TV. Far better to sit together around the dining room table. Turn off the television and use the mealtime to converse with your children, discussing what is going in their lives. At the end of the meal, before the family scatters in different directions to their various activities, read a passage of the Bible and pray.

It is not enough, however, just to read the Scriptures. As a catechism teacher for many years I am surprised at how little some of our young people know about the Bible, especially considering they have been present at family devotions their whole lives. Perhaps they switched off and did not take it in.

commands "when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deut. 6:7) The life of the Christian is not confined to times of corporate worship, family devotions, and Bible study. Being a Christian is for all of life, in all we do and say. One of our hymns expresses this aptly;

*Fill thou my life, O Lord my God  
in every part with praise,  
that my whole being may proclaim  
thy being and thy ways.  
Not for the lip of praise alone,  
nor e'en the praising heart  
I ask, but for a life made up  
of praise in every part.*<sup>1</sup>

We are to make use of every opportunity to teach our children about the Lord. Programmes on the TV, books read, holidays, a beautiful sunset, a clear night sky, disobedience at home, a conflict at school – all these are occasions for instruction and the application of biblical principles.

In the early years much of this will fall to the mother as she is usually the one looking after the children in those

pre-school years. Mothers have a great influence on the lives of their children, for good or bad. The first seven years of a child's life are formative; many claim that 80% of a child's personality is formed by this age. I weep inside when I see many mothers dropping off their babies and very young children to a pre-school or child-care centre while they go off to work for the whole day. It is not for nothing we are seeing so many behavioural problems in young people in our society; and we have yet to reap what we are now sowing in a generation raised in childcare institutions. Christian mothers have a great opportunity to lay a biblical foundation in a loving and godly home early on in the lives of their children.

### Your example

As parents we make promises when our children are baptised. The pastor of your church will ask you; "Do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community to do all in your power to instruct this child in the Christian faith and to lead him by your example into a life of Christian discipleship?"

Your *instruction* is vital; so too is your *example*. Some one has said that given a choice between doing what you do and doing what you say children will do what you do rather than do what you say. Instruction must be reinforced by example. Read the Scriptures yourself so your children will want to read them. Be eager to be at worship so that your children too will want to be there. Set an example of doing what is right and just in your own life so they will want to do the same. Your example is crucial.

All of us want to see the promises of God's covenant passed on to and taken up by our children and grandchildren. Ultimately, of course, that is in the Lord's hands and of his grace and covenant love. But the Lord calls us as parents and grandparents to fulfil our covenant obligations. May God help us to be wise, diligent, and faithful as we seek to train our children in the way of the Lord.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Written by Horatius Bonar in 1866. (No. 449 in the *Psalter Hymnal*)

*Rev John Haverland is Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Pukekohe.*

## Books in focus

### ***Boyhood and Beyond; Practical Wisdom for Becoming a Man***

Bob Schultz

Published by Great Expectations Book Co.

Reviewed by Andy van Ameyde,  
Reformed Church of Dovedale.

Many of us in the Reformed Churches of NZ have a reasonably narrow range of authors we turn to – the likes of MacArthur, Boice, Guinness and Spurgeon. We do this because of the sound doctrinal reputation and theology of such authors. Even if we are not quite in agreement with the position on all of what these authors believe, yet we are happy to grant their respective viewpoints some authority. So here in contrast, I am reviewing a book by a theological “no name”. However I am also basing my recommendation of this book on an assessment of its content by a number of folk from within my church who have endorsed this book’s soundness and helpful insights.

What I know of Bob Schultz is based on what I have read on the back cover of his book. Bob is a carpenter by trade who lives in the North Western USA. He has a wife and four daughters. He strikes me as a simple unassuming man who through the trials of a godly life has gained a great deal of biblical wisdom

and he has sought to impart this wisdom through writing a book which challenges boys, young men and older men alike, to become the men the Lord wants them to be as they develop and mature in relationship with Him

Schultz’s style is to use everyday family and work place situations as “parables” to bring out biblical truth and wisdom and will certainly help instil in the reader that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of Wisdom” The book consists of 30 short chapters, packed full of wisdom and sanctified common sense. Chapter topics covered include authority, inventiveness and honesty as well as chapters which challenge natural inclinations to fear, laziness and temptation. Let me give you a taste of two examples.

There is a chapter entitled “Preparing for a Wife” which will cause boys to sit up and pay special attention. Boys will most likely be surprised by Schultz’s advise. “God designed the perfect classroom for marriage training. They are called little sisters!”

Another chapter is entitled, “A Time to Kill”. He begins the chapter with these words. “There is a time to kill. One challenge of growing into a man is learning when it is a time to kill and when it is not. Sometimes people get mixed up and kill when they shouldn’t and refuse to kill when they should. How can a boy know when it is right?” The chapter concludes with these profound words. “We live in a day when people kill their own babies yet wont kill a diseased mouse in their pantry. We need men who have the courage to kill when it is time to kill”.

Other notable chapter titles are “No rest no work”, “Mr. Industry versus Mr. Sloth” and “Forgiveness and Dirty Diapers”.

This book can be read alone or used in a group setting in church activities or in the home around the family table. Each chapter ends with some discussion questions and has a relevant verse or passage of scripture to refer to.

Schultz has written a sequel to this book entitled “Created to Work”, which is written in a similar style but specifically challenges our modern culture addicted to leisure and entertainment.

Both these books provide excellent lessons of life for men of all ages but

are also applicable to young women as they contemplate the type of young man the Lord would have for them.

### ***Thoughts for Young Men***

John Charles Ryle

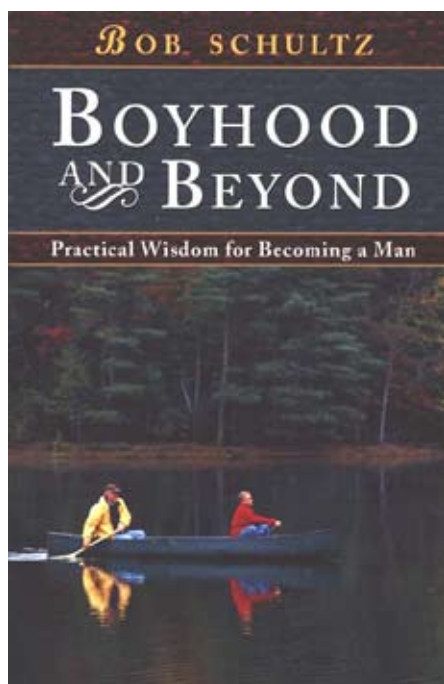
Reviewed by Erik Loots

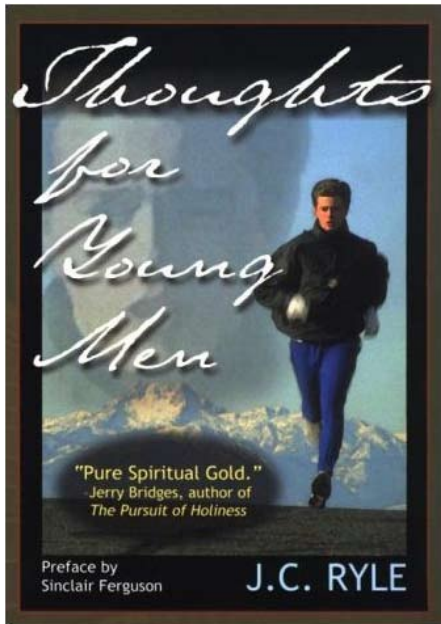
J C Ryle was the son of a rich man, a brilliant scholar and an outstanding sportsman who became a bishop. He started his ministry in the poverty stricken village of Fawley shortly after his family suddenly became bankrupt. He was a practical man, seeming to ‘understand us with all our frailties’, and chiefly strived to help people along the path of godly living.

In *Thoughts for Young Men* Bishop Ryle expresses his concern for our (young men’s) immortal souls. He briefly explains why he is concerned for us, and then goes on to point out dangers and give general counselling. Each chapter is divided into separate points which are individually discussed. These points deal with problems and challenges we constantly struggle with, and he supports his arguments with Scripture in a clear practical manner.

I found this book to be a particularly good read, challenging and encouraging. It is a short read, and right to the point, yet stimulates some thorough soul searching. The book is well structured, making it easy to pick up where you left off. Thus I found it convenient to read a point or two at a time, and then take some time to reflect on it. I also enjoyed the way Bishop Ryle seems familiar with our challenges. It often feels like people don’t understand what we young men face, yet this is definitely not the case with J.C. Ryle. The book was originally written a long time ago, yet this is not evident when reading. It is well adapted and reads comfortably. The book is not an assault on all our iniquities, but a firm practical push in the right direction.

The points discussed in this book are very well structured. The main chapters are headed: *Reasons for Exhorting Young Men*, *Dangers to Young Men*, *General Counsels to Young Men* and *Special Rules for Young Men*. Some of the points I found particularly interesting or challeng-





ing included the opening point under *Dangers to Young Men: One danger to young men is pride*, and the very next point, *Another danger to young men is the love of pleasure*. I found myself to be familiar with every single point in this chapter. *General Counsels to Young Men* included chapters such as *Remember it is possible to be a young man and yet to serve God* and *Never forget that nothing is so important as your soul*. I found the last chapter, *Special Rules for Young Men*, to be particularly challenging, and the first point, *For one thing, resolve at once, by God's help, to break off every known sin, however small, to be the biggest challenge*.

I would strongly recommend this book for any young man. It is easy enough to understand and profit from even if you are not a big fan of reading, yet this book has food for the spirit that will

benefit any intellectual. It is also not specifically aimed at the spiritually weak or strong, but will help you along the path of godly living regardless of what stage you are at.

So now, if you went through all the trouble to read this review, you have hopefully decided to ask for the book for your birthday (If your birthday is too far away ask that it be added to your church's library). If that is not the case I urge you to consider the following: "You will be the same person next year that you are today, except for the people you meet, the books you read, and the Holy Spirit in your life working through them" (Doug Phillips).

*Erik is a second-year Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Canterbury, and a member of the Dovedale congregation.*

## Ministers' and wives' conference 2009

### Venue:

Forest Lakes Camp, Otaki.

### Date:

May 4-9, 2009

### Occasion:

Tri-ennial ministers' and wives' conference.

### Speaker:

Rev. Frank van Dalen (Director of Missions for WorldWitness – the mission body of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches in the USA.

Well, what better way to begin the conference than with some tried and true 'dutch bingo!' Monday evening's 'ice-breakers' revealed that Vicar Daniel Wilson is Rev. Michael Willemse's mother's husband's grandson's wife's aunt's father-in-law's brother's wife's grand-daughter's sister's husband. And so, with all of these family connections revealed, as well as other fun and brain-challenging activities, the conference had begun.

The next morning though, we got down to business. Each day was started with a devotion by one of the ministers. Following this, the main topic of the

morning was presented by Rev. Frank van Dalen. We benefited from experience and knowledge, enjoyed his sense of humour, and were touched by his warmth. There was good interaction throughout his talks followed by a time of often vigorous discussion.

On Tuesday, Frank spoke about the last chapters of Galatians and addressed the need to recognise different learning styles in our congregations. His thesis is that Paul's main point in Galatians (justification by faith alone in chapter 2) is 'proved' 10 different ways in chapters 3-5. Because Paul could not be present in these churches, he wanted everyone to get his point, one way or the other.

On Wednesday, the topic was discipleship and mentoring. The governing principle Frank addressed was this: "Never do anything alone that you can do with another." If you can make a visit, teach a class, memorise Scripture, or prepare a study with someone, then do so knowing that your investment of time accomplishes a double return. Using passage such as Acts 16, 1 Cor 12, and 2 Timothy 2:2, and his experiences as a missionary and missions director, Brother Frank encouraged us to understand teams and delegation. Time was also

spent looking at the differences between spiritual gifts and abilities. For example, will a 'leader' in the business world automatically make a good 'leader' in the church? With many churches struggling to find suitably qualified men for leadership, this topic provided the opportunity for stimulating discussion.

On Thursday, Frank spoke about lead-



Rev. Frank van Dalen





*(Left) Ministers' and wives' listening intently.*

*(Right) Vicar Daniel Wilson, Lois Hoyt, Rev. Bruce Hoyt, Rev. Robert van Wichen, Laurel Hoyt, Raewyn Wilson, partaking of the necessities of life.*

ing strong people. Such people, because of their strong convictions and commitment, can be a great asset to the church. But they can also be a liability if they dominate others. Here we must learn to distinguish between biblical leadership and ungodly control. He also talked about the importance of developing a clear vision as churches and unpacked the Blackaby principle: "Find out what God is doing and join Him in His work." Reflecting again on mission field experience, he encouraged us to think about how our churches are carrying out the Great Commission. Included within this topic was a discussion on how to deal with different interpretations of Scripture in the life of a congregation.

Finally, on Friday, he spoke about strategic planning. Launching from the planning work of World-Witness, and using the Great Commission as the

framework, he spoke on how "making disciples" (establishing the church), sits above "baptising them" (entry ministries – church planting), and "teaching them" (growth ministries). These then govern the work of nurturing current members and evangelizing the world. And with all this talk of strategy and vision, he also reminded us that God alone is the God of harvest. And yet, knowing this should also not cause us to be lazy in our planning or limited in our horizons.

The afternoons provided time for fellowship and fresh air! Many would walk and talk, others would grab some sort of ball for a bit of exercise. Sadly, this led to something of a broken finger for Harriet Haverland and an afternoon in Levin and then Palmerston North hospitals. She told us that she has now officially retired from playing volleyball! The other notable sporting achievement was that

of Andrew Nugteren. Out playing golf on Thursday, he decided to see how it would go if he just used his putter for the last 9 holes. Believe it or not, his game actually improved to the point that he hit a hole in one on the 130 meter par 3 seventeenth! The sight of three ministers whooping and hollering on the tee-box in congratulations probably left a deep impression on the magpies who were watching us! In addition to the sports, Tuesday evening also afforded us some time to sit down together and watch the movie "Fireproof." This is a new explicitly Christian movie about a couple whose marriage is in trouble. There was laughter, there were tears, and there was also some stimulating discussion about the movie afterwards.

Each evening was also begun with a presentation or devotion by one of the conference attendees. On Tuesday, John



*All those who attended the Ministers' and Wives' Conference*

Rogers spoke about his recent trip to Botswana and Uganda. On Wednesday, Frank van Dalen spoke about the ongoing mission work in Pakistan. Plentiful slides enabled us to see the mission work as well as here about the mission and work and be reminded about vast numbers of people in the world who still need to hear the gospel. On Thursday, John Haverland gave us an address on "Calvin the Preacher" – a presentation he recently made to a Calvin symposium at Grace Theological College in Auckland. Friday night saw two addresses. Firstly, John Rogers repeated a talk on the history of Reformed Christianity in New Zealand that he gave to a seminar associated with the recent GKSA synod. And secondly, Ken Campbell, a former minister of our denomination who served also in the

OPC in the USA., and who now lives in the Pukekohe area, encouraged us to boldly and humbly proclaim the Gospel to New Zealand as a whole, as we have opportunity.

Other items worth noting were another opportunity for us to make use and become more familiar with the *Sing to the Lord Psalter*. In this, we were ably accompanied by the gifted Hoyt family! The food was abundant, tasty, and very satisfying. Sadly, the fish weren't biting for Paul Archbald, and light rain made that fishing trip rather unmemorable! In addition, because of family and other commitments, not all of the ministers/vicars and their wives were able to be there. However, while they were missed, we were able to remember them in our prayers. The organising baton for the next

conference, scheduled for 2012, God willing, was passed on to the ministers of the Wellington Presbytery.

Finally then, and on behalf of the ministerial corps and their wives, we want to express our sincere thanks to the churches for making this extremely beneficial and rewarding time possible. The time passes all too quickly, and before we know it we are farewelling colleagues, friends, and brothers and sisters in the Lord. We trust that this time will yield many blessings as we return to minister amongst you all, strengthened by the ties of Christian fellowship and encouraged by the focused time of study and prayer that we have been privileged to enjoy.

**Pastor Andre Holtslag**

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## Reformed identity in New Zealand – a reflection

The week after their Synod in January this year, the Reformed Churches of South Africa hosted a **Conference on Reformed Identity Worldwide**, at which papers were presented on that theme by various speakers from around the world, including yours truly. I was also asked to present it at our recent Ministers & Wives Conference and some of the brothers thought it would be good for Faith in Focus. Herewith, only slightly edited (and a few headings added so you can find your place easily when you come back with your coffee).

To know who one is one must know where one came from. That is not only common sense; it is also a commonly iterated theme in Scripture. "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave you birth," Isaiah 51:1.

### Early days

The Rev. Samuel Marsden, an Anglican, preached the first sermon in New Zealand on Christmas Day, 1814, on Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of his good pleasure." Quite appropriate, don't you

think? Ten years later, two brothers, the Revs Henry & William Williams, of the Church Missionary Society, began missionary work among the Maori in the North in earnest (1823 and 1825 respectively). They and their wives fit the pattern of so many missionaries of that era – wonderfully dedicated, resourceful and godly men and women. And in time the Lord blessed them with a good harvest.

At the extreme south of the country, on Stewart Island, there is a memorial to the Rev. & Mrs JFH Wohlers, Lutheran missionaries to the Foveaux Strait Maori from 1844 to 1885 (invited there by the local chiefs, by the way). The inscription tells us they travelled the Strait, not the calmest stretch of water in the world, between Bluff, Ruapuke Island, and Stewart Island in an open whaleboat, "living laborious lives, sharing the life and hardships of their people in the simplicity of Christ, they taught and exemplified his more excellent way and lived to see them a Christianized and civilized community." What a wonderful testimony.

In 1848, Free Presbyterian immigrants established a settlement in Dunedin, in the south of the South Island. Not too many years later they built the First Church of Dunedin, and in its foyer is

this declaration, from the pen of the Rev. Thomas Burns:

*If it shall be GOD's will that we shall succeed in establishing this colony, I persuade (sic) myself with HIS blessing attending us we may be instrumental in planting down in these favoured islands a well ordered GOD-fearing community that may stand in these remote regions as a sample of the kingdom of CHRIST which like a light burning in a dark place shall bear no indistinct testimony to the TRUTH.*

Sadly, in 1901, only 50 years after such a wonderful beginning, the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand passed the Declaratory Act. It was designed to remove scruples some felt "... on such points in the Confession of Faith as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed faith, the Church retain(ing) full authority to determine, in any case that may arise, what points fall within this description, and thus to guard against any abuse of this liberty...."

### From the 1950s

Half a century later, after the Second World War, there was another migratory flight from Europe, with many Dutch

among them arriving in New Zealand. Few of them came with particularly religious motives. They just wanted to establish a better life for themselves in, hopefully, a more peaceful part of the world. As you will be aware, the Dutch can be quite self-effacing, as one sees, for example, in the saying: "If y'ain't Dutch, y'ain't much." The New Zealand government of the early fifties disagreed. If you were not a good Anglo-Saxon, then you were only much if you were young, single, and had a vocational qualification. A good number of those young Dutch immigrants married within a few days of arrival and there is nothing like marriage and children to make one take a more serious view of life and a good number of them began to remember their reformed roots. They ought to have been able to find the Reformed Faith in the Presbyterian Church and in 1950 we would not say that it was not there at all. Nevertheless, as the Rev. RS Miller put it, "not a few regard (the Declaratory Act) as a general escape hatch, far beyond what is warranted by the actual terms."<sup>1</sup> The upshot was the formation of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand in 1953, with the Three Forms of Unity and a continental Church polity.

The Reformed Faith is simply the faith of the Bible and as part of the new world New Zealand has, as indicated above, benefited from all four streams of the Reformed Church. But we did not greatly appreciate our inheritance. The Rev. Miller, quoted a moment ago, spoke as a member of the Westminster Fellowship, a sort of confessional underground formed within the Presbyterian Church in the 1960s. It took forty years for members of that fellowship finally to break from the Presbyterian Church and form, in 2000, the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. We of the Reformed Churches are thankful and glad finally to have another Reformed denomination alongside us. They number just under 1000 members; we about 3500. We have a few hundred 'reformed baptist' brothers and sisters who hold to a Calvinist view of the sovereignty of God, and maybe another few hundred evangelicals similarly influenced by John MacArthur of California.<sup>2</sup> But that 4500 Grace Presbyterian and Reformed is the sum total of confessional Reformed believers, at least in the mainstream of society in a population of four million.<sup>3</sup>

Add to this fact of being a very small reformed remnant our place on the planet. We are truly at the utter-

most parts of the earth with respect to mother Jerusalem. When it comes to developments in matters theological, they tend to originate elsewhere; usually in Europe, sometimes in America. But the trend is from Europe, through America, then Australia and finally they reach us. Sometimes such developments manifestly challenge biblical orthodoxy. Others will not. But when you are small and at the end of the line – and you have watched the latest new theological 'discovery' make its way to you ocean by ocean, the danger of the siege mentality is real. It is an awkward position to be in. It is the sort of soil in which mere suspicion grows. Paul commands Timothy, "Guard the deposit," and Jude, "Content earnestly for the faith." The Reformed Churches of New Zealand



have certainly sought to do that. The challenge is to continue to do so, as we are all under apostolic command to do, yet still retaining a broad and generous frame of mind.

### Shaping the Kiwi mind

There are two other important social factors of a historical nature that have played their part in the formation of the Kiwi psyche. The first we share with much of the new world: the desire to leave the class and religious conflicts of the old world behind. For this reason, for many years religion and politics were off the agenda of social discourse in New Zealand. Controversy was to be avoided almost at all costs. One academic speaks of "a deep vein of reticence about religion" which is almost a national trait."<sup>4</sup> The 1877 Education Act provided for

'free, compulsory, public' primary education and such education was required to be secular. In terms of the Act itself, secular meant non-denominational. It definitely did not mean non-religious or non-Christian. But then, when has anything been read with historical integrity in the last 50 years? All this has led to a very deep secularism with respect to national life. Australia is often regarded as the most secular country in the world but, embarrassing as it is, we will not concede the title. But secularism does not rest on its laurels and for the last nine years, under the previous PM Helen Clark, we must have had the most vigorously anti-Christian government outside the Islamic world.

The other historical factor that has played an important part in developing

the national outlook is that, from the very beginning of European settlement, New Zealand has been a place for the little guy. It may well be that a good percentage of Australia's early British settlers were hand-picked by the illustrious members of Her Majesty's judiciary, but New Zealand got the rest – those whom Sir Robert Peel's boys in blue could not catch. The invitation inscribed on America's Statue of Liberty applied every bit as much to New Zealand in our early years.

*"... Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to  
breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming  
shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-  
tossed to me."*

Only, so true was it of us, we didn't have the competency in our mother tongue to pen such wonderful lines. Apart from a few gentry in Canterbury province and the South Island hill country, New Zealanders are almost all of lowly stock – hard-working, thankful to have a chance to make a go of it and even own one's own piece of land!<sup>5</sup> And everyone must have an equal chance; we are very democratic. Elections, yes, but ours, thank you very much, not God's. Arminianism sits very well with that mindset.

### **A place for the little guy**

Thanks to the evangelical Church Missionary Society, the Anglican Church saw much blessing among the Maori in the early years. Apart from that, however,

universities been the womb of all heresies? Thus the evangelical church has proved herself very susceptible to the Pentecostal movement of the fifties and sixties and the Charismatic movement of the seventies and on to this day. And because of their dry liberalism, so did the 'established' churches.<sup>6</sup>

### **Tributaries of the reformed river**

Yet a blessing arose out of that restriction of early Dutch immigrants to single young people. If I were allowed to, I'd wager a braaied boerewors that none of our first elders had ever served on a Session in the Netherlands back home. This has meant that all our experience has been hard-earned. It has meant that we have made many mistakes. (Although, to be perfectly frank, when

operating according to a sort of mutual de-recognition, worship happily in the same pews and some sleep in the same beds among us. Amazing how uniting some 'walls of separation' – generational and geographical – can be.

But those various Dutch reformed tributaries were not all that flowed into our little reformed river. From quite early days we had ministerial assistance from the Christian Reformed Churches of North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of North America. The CRCNA gave us their Psalter-Hymnal, which we are only today in the process of replacing, and their Church Order served as the basis of ours. If I read things right, our ethos as a New Zealand English Reformed Church of continental provenance was really set by the already anglicised CRCNA (if to speak of an anglicised American is not somehow offensive to both! Although TS Eliot would no doubt be thrilled). But the OPC influence was no less. Two of her ministers became almost permanent fixtures on our ecclesiastical landscape, whereas none of the CRCNA men did. I refer to the Rev. RO Zorn, later professor of Systematic Theology and principal of the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia, and the Rev. GI Williamson. The latter served for eighteen of the first 32 years of our Churches' life and with his exclusive Psalmody and what some would view as a strict reading of the regulative principle of worship, left his own mark on our Church culture – and tensions!<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning, a native Kiwi stream trickled in as well. In the first year, 1953, the Rev. JA Scarrow and his congregation left the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and were accepted into the Reformed Churches under the name Reformed Presbyterian Church. At the present time four of our fifteen active ministers are of Anglo-Saxon, non-Presbyterian descent; there have been times when the proportion has been greater. We have one, and at the end of the year, hopefully, two ex-South African ministers. For honesty's sake, that raises a real concern. Of our present fifteen ministers, only six are sons of the Church, along with two ministerial students. Why is it that, after 55 years, we still cannot produce our own ministers? (And we are about a half a dozen short.) Does that bespeak a real spiritual malaise? And it bothers me to think that I may be part of that spiritual malaise.

“But in their youthful naïveté, all these young Dutchies thought they could do what their fathers could not: work together and stay together in one Church! And by God's grace they have.”

because the established Churches were too closely identified with England's ruling establishment in the minds of the early British settlers, they have never had such a great hold. Going along with this being a place for the little guy, there has always been, in the Kiwi character, a strong anti-intellectual streak. The result has been a strong attraction to socialism. We do not like tall poppies. They must be cut. All must be equal.

Religiously, all this has meant that the baptist influenced, pietistic streams of Christianity have been more popular. My wife and I were born and bred Open Brethren. The first century of the Open Brethren in New Zealand is a frankly exciting story of grass-roots evangelism and growth, and contains much to admire. But the churches growing out of those baptistic, pietistic strands have always tended to anti-intellectualism with a hearty distrust of higher education – after all, have not the German

I look around the reformed world, I'm not sure we've made a great deal more mistakes than others.) But it also meant that some baggage was left behind. There is only one reformed Church in New Zealand of continental origin. The early members came, and recent ones still come, from the NHK, the CGKN, the GKN, the GKNV, the NGK, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, the PKN, and who knows what other acronymous bodies between or beyond; with black stockings or whatever other colour hosiery was or is worn in the land of windmills, tulips and ollie bolen. But in their youthful naïveté, all these young Dutchies thought they could do what their fathers could not: work together and stay together in one Church! And by God's grace they have. Not without lumps and strains, but they have done it so far. Why, even the Dutch and Frisians who, so I am led to believe, are rather like Jews and Samaritans back home,

We are beginning to see more Korean members and a Korean minister in Auckland in the near future would be highly desirable. We have talked with some Kosin and Korean-American Presbyterian Churches in NZ from time to time, who also are reformed people, but real progress with respect to a living recognition awaits the future. My own congregation is made up of people from about eight or nine different original nationalities, including five Korean families.

As you can see, it is quite a mixed reformed multitude travelling to Zion in the Land of the Long White Cloud. Yet the rationale of our founding still stands: "a clear maintenance of the Evangelical Truth of the Reformed confessions;" also, a sincere desire from the beginning to "become a real New Zealand Church as soon as possible, a confessional Presbyterian (Reformed) Church."<sup>8</sup> To express the genuineness of this desire, from the beginning English was used, and the Westminster Confession honoured.<sup>9</sup> Over the years there was discussion over the Westminster's teaching on several subjects on which it was considered to differ from the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism,<sup>10</sup> but in 1965 it was accepted as a subordinate standard with the same status as the continental Forms.

### **Broad, fundamentalist, or charismatic?**

I suppose that makes us a sort of Reformed broad Church! I have a suspicion – and if it is an unkind one, forgive me – but I have a suspicion an observation like that might raise a bemused smile from some of our sisters. For sometimes I can imagine we might be perceived as fundamentalists. I hope that would be a mistake – either of observation or of the observer's definition of fundamentalist. We walked with the Rev. Dr Carl McIntyre and the International Council of Christian Churches for a few years. A good deal of its doctrinal basis appealed to us. One writer describes especially its position on the inspiration, inerrancy and finality of Scripture (and verbal revelation thereby), as "music to our ears." But eventually, we found that organisation too narrow and in 1969 "freed ourselves from this bondage," as one of our most influential early elders, Mr Dick van der Pyl, put it.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, it is true, we certainly believe in fundamental doctrines and if that makes us fundamentalist in the eyes

of those outside the Reformed world, or in it for that matter, so be it. We too have struggled with the challenge of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and, by the Lord's grace, have not been too influenced by them – although, sadly, we have lost people to them. But it seems to us that those movements have often been the 'Christian' expression of the rise of the post-modern outlook on life and the extremes of the Charismatic movement today are surely little less than a barely baptised post-modern mere spirituality. For the Word has been drowned by some spirit.

Yet it concerns us also that the redemptive-historic aspect of true reformed exegesis, which we too insist upon, may not also be being used to the same end – by which, somehow, the Spirit is said to be leading us beyond the written Word. For did not the inspired record cease about 90AD? And is not our Lord still unrolling the scroll of history? Indeed he is. But here we wish to stand with Paul, for we think he stands with Jesus, and "not go beyond what is written" for "the Scripture cannot be broken."<sup>12</sup> If that is fundamentalist, so be it. But that is where, by the grace of God, I believe the Reformed Churches of New Zealand presently stand.

Some South Africans refer to us as the Kiwi Doppers. I don't know whether the Japie Doppers consider that a compliment or an outrageous insult. We Kiwis are probably still trying to digest its import. But the same South Africans are quick to add that we sing too much, we pray too long, and we preach too long. But how can that be? Truth to tell, we probably sing more of

the Psalms than some of our exclusive Psalmist brethren.

It is interesting how history plays out. For, because of our immigration policy in the 1950s, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand were also established largely by trades people. That plays its part in the way we handle ourselves. Not too many of us, including yours truly, even though of a different origin, have learned the fine arts of urbanity. You will catch our drift fairly clearly, I think. Please forgive us for our brusqueness, our lack of subtlety, the rather direct manner in which it comes at you.

### **Today's challenges**

We confess freely we have not been greatly blessed evangelistically over the years. Or would it be more honest to say: not greatly obedient? There are many reasons for that, some perhaps valid. We went through a frankly disappointing couple of decades with respect to our wider mission mandate. But the last ten years have seen real progress, with opportunities being taken up in radio work, and teaching and diaconal opportunities especially in Uganda and Papua-New Guinea with two men beginning full-time service in those countries right now, not to mention what individual congregations do on their own initiative. That is always one of the greatest challenges of the Church of Jesus Christ. I think the Lord is helping us rise to that again. It feels good; it feels blessed; it is a great honour to be used by the Lord.

Another great challenge facing us today, along with the whole Church, is that of worshiping in a manner that speaks to the people and is understood by the



people, yet which still does justice to our great and glorious God. There is certainly a great deal of effort going into being culturally relevant. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand would generally feel, I believe, that most of that misses the boat on at least two grounds.

First of all, Christianity is not presently the driver of Western, and therefore probably of any, culture. The worship service of the Church has always been, is now, and ever shall be a covenant-renewal ceremony. Why should the forms, music particularly but also the manner of conducting a ceremony, that grow out of a non-Christian, indeed an increasingly anti-Christian culture, supply the pattern for the Church? But that, under the burden of relevance, is what much of what calls itself the Church wants to adopt.

But secondly, and related to that, our

cultural leadership and raises up a new Thomas Cranmer and JS Bach.

RJ Rushdoony has described the psychological hallmark of Western man as a “flight from responsibility.” He is right. Avoidance of responsibility must be one of the most obvious sociological facts of our age; and it is the mark of the sinner; it is the mark of the child. As every parent knows, sinful childishness is something simply to face down. Let them stamp their feet. Let them yell. Let them slam the door. They will get over it. They will grow up in time – if we also instruct them! (And by the way, that observation often seems to me to apply a good deal more to late twenty and thirty year olds, even forty year olds than the present crop of children and teenagers.) And why have we not learned this? Did not Alexander Solzhenitsyn tell us this nearly forty years ago

“For a better day will come to this world. Make no mistake. Jesus rules its history.”

God is great and glorious. The word glory has to do with ‘weightiness,’ grandeur therefore, majesty and awe. How can a culture, in which any and every form of communication, discourse and education, has been reduced to entertainment,<sup>13</sup> and entertainment tailored to your personal predilection to boot, provide the model for the Church’s worship of a ‘weighty’ God? What place has the jocular, necessarily fun-filled, night-club format in the Temple of the Most High?! For, however much we may want to democratise him and make him not much less than *primes inter pares*, he will not oblige. He is still the Most High, ever glorious, Lord of Hosts, “a consuming fire,” before whom the four and twenty elders in heaven cast their crowns and themselves fall down; before whom the angels cover their faces still. We must, no doubt, speak in the vernacular – although not the vulgar, in the modern sense of that word. But I do not see how our worship can change in essence. Nor do I see, at least in a Western cultural context, how the expression of our worship can change, until once again perhaps the Lord, in his sovereign mercy, grants Christianity

– that we had become afraid to teach our children, that the West had handed cultural leadership to its children? What folly. What dereliction in our covenantal duty. In this respect, it is a time for us in New Zealand, as it is always time for all men everywhere, to stiffen our spines, to keep our nerve, to worship still in a service shaped by God’s covenant; singing in plain language for sure but remembering also our history; and to music, be it old or modern, that will bear the weight of the glory of God, so far as human expression is capable.

It is also time to keep our nerve and remember that we will only hear the Spirit speaking to the Church today through the Word he inspired yesterday and declared sufficient until Jesus comes again. We must preach that Word, in season and out of season, in the pulpit and out of the pulpit. And if we can learn how to use modern communication media so as to proclaim the Gospel in a way that still does justice to the depth of man’s spiritual problem, the thorough nature of God’s solution, and, frankly, the intelligence and integrity of man as the image-bearer of God, so much the better.

For a better day will come to this world. Make no mistake. Jesus rules its history. And he rules it as Lord and Christ for his Church (Ephesians 1:22-23). He is building a kingdom that will have victory, which kingdom and victory, when all enemies have been put under his feet, he will hand over to his Father that God may be all in all. Thank you.

**John Rogers**

Potchefstroom, January, 2009

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Rev. RS Miller, *The Evangelical Presbyterian*, Vol.XIV, p.737, quoted in GI Williamson, *Our Reformed Faith* (Auckland, 1965), p.30.
- <sup>2</sup> For completeness, I should say that I do know of one Netherlands Reformed Congregation and one small Free Church of Scotland. I doubt they would number more than 200 souls between them.
- <sup>3</sup> There are also the Afrikaans Christian Church of NZ and reportedly about 80 Korean Churches in Auckland city alone, many of them Presbyterian of some sort. But these are language specific churches.
- <sup>4</sup> Jane Simpson, “The forgotten role of religion in the drive for NZ women’s rights,” *The Press*, (Monday, 19 December, 1944), p.11, quoted in John Haverland, *Feed my Sheep: Preaching the Gospel in a Postmodern New Zealand Society*, p.137.
- <sup>5</sup> In the 1970s the British journalist, Austin Mitchell, described New Zealand as the “Half-gallon, Quarter-acre, Pavlova Paradise.”
- <sup>6</sup> Bishop Selwyn, who was sent to New Zealand in 1842, was vigorously high-Church and undermined the work of the CMS missionaries a great deal. So also did Governor Grey who arrived in 1846. In 1856, Selwyn’s friend, Henry Harper was appointed bishop of Christchurch; he was very pro the Oxford Movement, only not as orthodox.
- <sup>7</sup> That is not intended as a slight but as an observation. There is no doubt he contributed a good deal of steel to our theological backbone, even in those who disagreed with his worship principles.
- <sup>8</sup> The Rev. Bill Deenick, *Why did we Establish the Reformed Churches?* 1953.
- <sup>9</sup> The Rev. Jack Sawyer noted in his essay, “The Character of our Churches,” in *Trust and Obey: a Forty Year History of the RCNZ*, that in 1953, the protocol of the Auckland congregation spoke of “cordial acceptance of the Westminster Confession,” p.452.
- <sup>10</sup> Viz., the covenant of works (WCF:7:2), the salvation of elect infants dying in infancy (10:3), the authority of the civil magistrate in relation to Christian liberty (20:4), Sabbath/Lord’s Day (21:7), marriage and divorce (24), and the different approach from the Belgic Confession to the doctrine of the Church.(25, 31). The version of the WCF adopted is that as amended by the OPC.
- <sup>11</sup> DG Vanderpyl, *Reformed Churches: Wherefore and Why?* Reformed Publications, Hamilton, NZ, pp.17-18.
- <sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:6; John 10:35.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. Neil Postman’s book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, for example.

# How women started the culture-war

(Part 4)

Previous issues have shown how the industrial revolution forced both men and their work out of the home and into the factory, creating a harsh business world separate from home and family. This relegated the preservation of love, emotion, and values to the home and to women. Eventually the very concept of virtue which was once a masculine trait, came to be seen as feminine, and focussed primarily on sexual purity.

## Manly men

Ultimately, however, the attempt to make women the moral reformers of men was self-defeating. Why? Because when virtue is defined as a feminine quality instead of a human quality, then requiring men to be virtuous is seen as the imposition of a feminine standard – a standard that is alien to the masculine nature. Being virtuous took on overtones of being effeminate instead of manly. The Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing was once praised by a friend who described him as “almost feminine” and admired his “womanly temperament.”

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a reaction set in and men began to rebel against female efforts to reform them. A new word entered the American language: overcivilised. Men began to worry that boys were now growing up far too exclusively under the tutelage of mothers and female teachers, with the result that they were becoming soft and effeminate.

In reaction, a new emphasis was laid on the wild, untamed masculine nature. This is when legends of the lost frontier became popular – the lives of Davy Crocket and Daniel Boone. Theodore Roosevelt went west and began to celebrate the “strenuous life” of the outdoorsman. Ernest Thomas Seton dressed up in an Indian costume and founded the American Boy Scouts. A 1914 Scout manual expressed the new philosophy vividly:

*[The] Wilderness is gone, the Buckskin man is gone, the painted Indian has hit the trail over the Great Divide, the privations and*

*hardships of pioneer life which did so much to produce sterling manhood are now but a legend, and we must depend on the Boy Scout movement to produce the MEN of the future.*

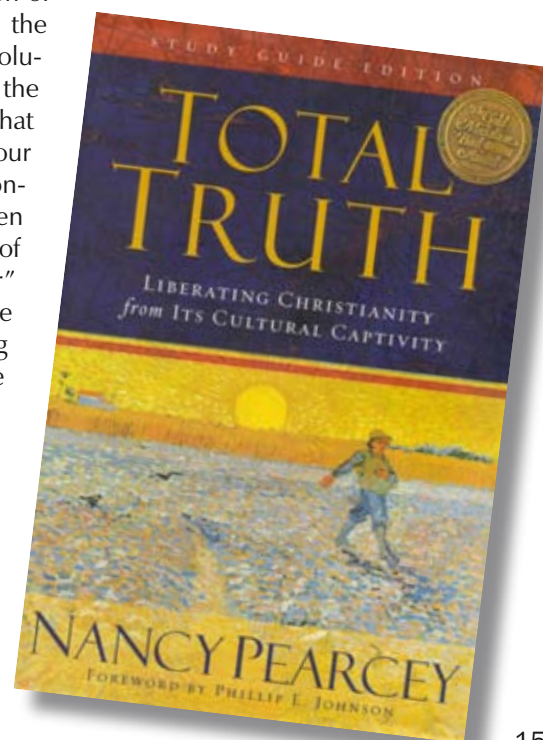
Literary works began to sound a tone of male rebellion against female standards of virtue. Around the turn of the century, says one historical account, there arose “new genres of cowboy and adventure fiction, written by such authors as Owen Wister [author of the first Western] and Jack London” – books that “celebrated the man who had escaped the confines of domesticity.” So-called “bad boy” books became a popular genre, the best-known being Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. The latter ends with Huck taking off for lands unknown “because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it.” Note that “sivilizing” is something done by old maid aunts. Twain’s books express a poignant ambivalence of “both reverence for and resentment of the home and female standards.”

Some writers began to celebrate the male as primitive and barbarian, praising his “animal instincts” and “animal energy.” The Tarzan books, featuring a wild man raised by apes, became immensely popular. This new definition of masculine virtue reflected in part the influence of Darwin’s theory of evolution. For if humans evolved from the animal world, the implication was that the animal nature is the core of our being. This was a startlingly new concept: From antiquity, virtue had been defined as the exercise of restraint of the “lower” passions by the “higher” faculties of the rational spirit and the moral will. But now, in a stunning reversal, the animal passions were held up as the true self. “It is a new sensation to come to see man as an animal – the master animal of the world,” wrote John Burroughs (son of the author of Tarzan). The rise of Social Darwinism exalted “the triumph of man over man in primitive struggle.”

Even churches sensed a prob-

lem and began recasting religion in a more masculine tone. Too long religion had been the domain of women, tinged with sentimental piety. In 1858 an Atlantic Monthly article scolded parents, saying that if a son was “pallid, puny, sedentary, lifeless, joyless,” then he was directed to the ministry – while on the other hand the “ruddy, the brave, and the strong” were directed to secular careers. The answer? “Muscular Christianity” – a concept that combined hardy physical manliness with ideals of Christian service.

The best-known advocate of muscular Christianity was the evangelist Billy Sunday, who proclaimed that Jesus was “no dough-faced, lick-spittle proposition” but “the greatest scrapper that ever lived.” Sunday offered followers a “hard-muscled, pick-axed religion,” not some “dainty, sissified, lily-livered piety.” Books appeared with titles like *The Manliness of Christ*, *The Manly Christ*, and *The Masculine Power of Christ*. A church-based movement appeared called the Men and Religion Forward movement, which lasted until the 1950s, stressing an image of Jesus as the Successful Businessman or Salesman. Organisers bought ads on the sports pages, alongside ads for cars and whisky, and proclaimed that women “have had charge of the Church work long enough.” They promoted a manly



religion that emphasised strength and social responsibility.

### Romper room dads

This welcome emphasis on male strength was tainted, however, by the continuing theme that genuine masculinity is attained only by resisting “feminine” standards. In 1926 an influential book called “The Mauve Decade” opened with a savage attack on what the author called “the Titanesse” – the American woman as arbiter of public taste and morals. The author worried about the masculinity of boys growing up in woman-dominated homes and schools.

In the 1940s, Philip Wylie penned a best-selling book called “A Generation of

and the beleaguered Father Bear in the popular Berenstain Bears picture-book series. When Mother Bear decides the family must stop eating junk food, it’s Papa Bear who sneaks his favorite snacks. When Mother Bear decides the family must give up TV, it’s Papa Bear who sneaks downstairs at night to watch the tube. The books present a stereotype where mothers impose rules, and childish fathers break them. Even the children scold Papa Bear for his infractions. It’s all presented as humorous, of course. Haha! Let’s teach children to feel superior to their incompetent fathers.

When I was attending seminary, a professor opened class one day by telling a story of how he was left alone – alone!

“As fatherhood lost status ... men showed a decreasing investment in being fathers.”

Vipers”, in which he accused women of “Momism” – of smothering, controlling, and manipulating their sons. I still remember as an adolescent seeing articles in women’s magazines on the dangers of “Momism.” In the 1950s, Playboy made its appearance, warning that women are economic parasites and that marriage is a trap that will “crush man’s adventurous, freedom-loving spirit.” An early issue showed a full-page spread of a smiling bride and groom – but on the next page, the bride’s nose and chin are elongated, her veil sticks out like spikes, and the poor man discovers he’s married a harpy. The theme was that family life and values are imposed by women, but are oppressive to men.

For the first time it became socially acceptable for fathers not to be involved with their families. By the 1920s and 30s in urban areas, the father had become the secondary parent who covered the “extras”: hobbies, sports, trips to the zoo. As one historian describes it, fathers were reduced to entertainers – Romper Room dads.

There emerged the now-familiar image of fathers as incompetent bumbler in the home, who are patronised by long-suffering wives and clever children – the image popularised today in the comic strip figure Dagwood Bumstead, Al Bundy on “Married with Children,”

– with his two small sons one Saturday morning while his wife went shopping. Unable to restrain their lively behavior, he finally imposed order by settling one boy at one end of the couch, the other boy at the other end, while he stationed himself rigidly between them, forbidding them to move or talk until his wife returned and rescued him. The (male) students in the class all laughed. And I wondered: When did it become socially acceptable for a Christian man to admit that he is incompetent as a father?

As fatherhood lost status, not surprisingly, men showed a decreasing investment in being fathers. From 1960 to 1980 there was a striking 43 percent reduction in the amount of time men spend in a family environment where young children are present. For many women today, on a personal level, the problem is not male dominance so much as male desertion.

### Feminist fury

As we noted earlier, the feminist movement began at roughly the same time women were swelling the ranks of the Benevolent Empire, so let’s back up now to see where it fits into the cultural pattern. From the beginning, feminism was marked by considerable anger and envy – not toward individual men so much as toward the fact of the opportunities

available to men in the public sphere. In 1912 one feminist wrote,

*Not since I started to do my own thinking have I been in any doubt as to which sphere most attracted me. The duties and pleasures of the average woman bore and irritate. The duties and pleasures of the average man interest and allure.*

As feminists saw it, the problem began when work was removed from the home. The solution, then, was obvious: Women should follow their work into the public arena. That’s what men had done; why not women? Even science supported the idea of getting out of the house. The Social Darwinists of the day explained that the reason men were superior to women (a premise they did not question) was that, from their brute beginnings, males had fought for survival out in the world, where they were subject to competition and natural selection – a process that weeds out the weak and inferior. By contrast, women were at home nurturing the young, out of the reach of natural selection, with the result that they evolved more slowly.

Ironically, even those who defended women against the Social Darwinist theories of biological inferiority did so by denigrating the home. Sociologist Lester Frank Ward argued that women were not inherently inferior; their faculties were merely underdeveloped because of their restriction to the home. Since nothing of significance happens in the home, those who spend time in it have only trivial matters upon which to exercise their minds, so it’s no wonder they are stunted in their development.

Feminists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman (a student of Ward’s) concluded that women would never undergo evolutionary progress as long as they remained isolated in the pre-scientific environment of the home. Gilman urged that all the functions remaining in the home should be removed and put under the care of scientifically oriented professionals. Only when taken out of the amateurish hands of the housewife, she said, would any progress be made in cooking, cleaning, or childcare. That may have sounded radical at the time but in our own day many women in essence follow Gilman’s recommendations: Many rely on pre-packaged foods or fast-food restaurants for much of their family’s food; they hire crews to clean their houses; and hand their children over to be raised by day care workers.



## Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

### Avondale

Women's Conference Queen's Birthday Weekend – 'Living the Life of Faith'. This conference is sponsored by Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ. Speakers will be Barbara Barker, wife of Frank Barker jr, founding pastor (now emeritus) of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and Denise Hamilton, a member of the church just mentioned. Denise has led Bible studies for high school and college girls for the last 30 years. For those who would like to know more, there are some brochures on the table in the foyer and if you are planning to go, please let Ann Hunt know asap.

Cadet and Calvinette Sunday will be next *Sunday 31st May* during the morning worship service. We missed out last year so this time we are back - and with a slightly larger group than in the recent years. We are having a good year so far with plenty of studies, activities and fun! God has - and continues to - truly bless us! After the service, the Cadets and Calvinettes will serve refreshments in the lounge.

### Bishopdale

Pastoral. It is our privilege this evening to witness the baptism of Arie, the second son of Steven and Angela Macdonald. We also warmly welcome those who have come especially for this occasion.

Congratulations to Tony Vanderpyl who turned 80 this week. The Lord has been good to you!

We have applied for approval to extend our building. Some of our neighbours have now objected. The critical issues appear to be traffic and parking. As a result there will be a hearing this Friday after which the Christchurch City Council will decide what to do. Please pray that the hearing would go well and that we and our neighbours would be at peace with the outcome!

Pastoral. We give thanks to God for His goodness to us! After looking for a

second minister for about three years, we are delighted that Andrew de Vries accepted our call. Please remember Andrew and Christina in your prayers. Last Sunday was particularly difficult for them as they had to tell the Langwarrin congregation that they were leaving. The next few months will be busy as we get ready for their arrival.

Pastoral. Marcus Balchin met with the elders this week having expressed his desire to profess his faith. After spending some time talking with Marcus, the elders were pleased to endorse his request. The date for his profession of faith has yet to be set.

### Bucklands Beach

Thank You. On behalf of the elderly, we want to give the young people of our congregation a warm thank you for the lovely game evening they have put on for us last week Saturday. We all had a great time. First we were warmly welcomed, this followed by a well-presented devotion on our relationship to each other. We were then paired off in groups to play board games over a cup of coffee or tea with a biscuit in the Hall. This followed with more fun in the Auditorium with Bible Pictionary and Hangman, where we had lots of fun and laughter. Thanks to our Youth.

### Christchurch

Notices. This past week there was another significant birthday as brother Wiebe Gorter turned 95 (yes, that's Ninety-Five...!!!) last Friday. We rejoice with Wiebe and the family in God's goodness in allowing Wiebe to come to this milestone in his life. To God be the glory!

LADIES!! Our sisters in Christ from the Grace Presbyterian Church have invited us to join them for a short conference called "Living the Life of Faith". It is being held on Tuesday 26th of May with the first session starting at 9.30am and Session Two starts at 10.45am ending at Lunchtime. The Third session is on Tuesday evening from 7.30pm – 8.30pm followed by Coffee and Desert. Session Four is a lunchtime session on Wednesday 27th starting with lunch at 12.30pm.

### Dovedale

Pastoral Notes. On Tuesday evening,

the Lord blessed TJ and Miriam van der Horst with a baby daughter, Eva Miriam. Both Miriam and Eva are doing well. We give thanks and praise to God for answering our prayers in terms of the birth and pray that He would continue to be with the growing van der Horst family! Psalm 127:3

### Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. At the last meeting of Session it was agreed to work towards calling Rev Jim Klazinga as a Minister of the Word to the church planting work at Timaru. It is envisaged that this would be a 'tent-making' ministry with Rev Klazinga continuing his secular employment, but also being employed by our church for perhaps one day per week. This plan is subject to overall congregational approval in Dunedin, Oamaru and Timaru. As the ministry would be part-time, there is a possibility that presbytery agreement also needs to be gained. It is intended to raise this matter at the next presbytery meeting as the first step. Do pray for the work in Timaru and for those involved in it.

Situation Vacant. Dunedin readers can wallow in familiar impulses in the May issue of *Faith in Focus*. First Church on the front cover, the Woos on the back cover, news of Willem Pieters within its pages. An opportunity has arisen for an enthusiastic person to be involved in the distribution of this go-ahead magazine. You will be responsible for unpacking, writing recipient names on the covers and lovingly placing the latest issue into the hands of each reader. Full training will be given. Aside from the satisfaction of a job well done, the rewards will not be of an earthly nature. If you believe you have what it takes to carry out this exciting role please apply in person to Netty van der Woude.

Pastoral Notes. An uplifting memorial service was held locally last Monday for Duncan Quarrie who died in London a month ago. Many of us have known Duncan as a member of our church for about a year in the mid 1990s before he resettled in England. Duncan's deep love for the Lord was strongly called to remembrance.

### Foxton

Movie night at the Bluebell Motel Foxton: On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30pm,

# OPROEP AAN NEDERLANDSE VETERANEN CALLING DUTCH VETERANS

The Directorate of Honours & Awards was recently approached by its counterpart in the Netherlands to assist in advising Dutch veterans living in Australia of their unclaimed medal entitlements.

If you are a Dutch veteran of World War II, the East Indies Campaign of 1945-1949 or service in Dutch New Guinea between 1949 and 1962, you may be entitled to unclaimed medals.

Dutch veterans who served in a military capacity between 6 April 1939 and 3 September 1945 and who are not entitled to the Commemorative War Cross (Oorlogs-Herinneringskruis) may be entitled to the Mobilisation War Cross (Mobilisatie-Oorlogskruis).

Former members of the Dutch forces who served in the Netherlands East Indies for a minimum of three months between 3 September 1945 and 4 June 1951 (or until 28 December 1949 for service in Dutch New Guinea) may be entitled to the Medal for Order and Peace (Ereteken voor Orde en Vrede). Former members of the Netherlands Armed Forces, and certain non-military Dutch nationals who served in Dutch New Guinea for a minimum of three months between 28 December 1949 and 23 November 1962 may be entitled to the New Guinea Commemorative Cross (Nieuw-Guinea Herinneringskruis).

In some circumstances relatives of deceased veterans, in the first or second generation, may be able to claim the posthumous award of various medals.

If you think that you or a deceased relative might be entitled to one of these medals, you can find out more by contacting the Netherlands Ministry of Defence at:

Ministry of Defence  
HOP/Honours and Awards  
Section Room 2M03  
Postbus 20703  
2500 ES Den Haag  
Nederland

or by e-mail: [onderscheidin-gen@mindef.nl](mailto:onderscheidin-gen@mindef.nl)

Be sure you provide all your



Medal for Order and Peace



New Guinea  
Commemorative Cross



Mobilisation War Cross

personal details, including your Dutch service number if known.

*Please do not contact the Australian Directorate of Honours & Awards about this matter.*

Medal images courtesy of Honours and Awards Section, Netherlands Ministry of Defence.

Bible Study Group B plans to watch the fantastic movie "Fireproof" at the Bluebell Motel, Foxton. If you're after a great resource to strengthen and affirm your marriage, or if you're an unmarried young adult wanting to learn more about the things that solidify relationships, please come and enjoy! You will laugh a lot & cry a lot, so bring the tissue box! Because it's a 2-hr movie, we plan to start at 7.30pm sharp so that we still have time afterwards to share the things that impacted us! Cost: a gold coin donation!

## Hastings

Pastoral assistance in Oamaru/Timaru. For the two weeks following the Ministers and Wives Conference I, Pastor Hoyt, will be working amongst the folks in Oamaru and Timaru. Since the Dunedin congregation has been without a minister for many months, the Dunedin session has asked for help in visiting and encouraging their members living in Oamaru and Timaru. Our session has agreed to the request of the Dunedin session for assistance and so has released me for that purpose for the two weeks through Sunday, 24 May. Please be in prayer for me and the folks in Oamaru and Timaru as well as the Dunedin session.

Profession of Faith – Mallorie de Vries. Session is pleased to announce that Mallorie de Vries intends to profess her faith at the Reformed Church of Hastings on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009. As a congregation we rejoice together with the de Vries family over Mallorie's desire to publicly express with her mouth the faith and commitment to Christ which is in her heart.

## North Shore

News & Announcements. Hearty congratulations to André Scheepers who received notice this week from Otago University that his dissertation on Cornelius van Til and presuppositional apologetics has been accepted for a Master of Theology degree. (It is just as well that I will not be examining André in apologetics when it comes to his Presbytery exam! JR)

North Shore organ crawl – Saturday 2 May 2009 at 1pm. The Auckland Organist's Association is organising a fun and informative tour of four churches on the North Shore, ending with afternoon tea at our church. This will be a family-friendly and relaxed event, meeting the local organists at their own benches, and you are all invited to come along. This is the premier social event of at least the week, not to be missed. Bring your families and invite some friends (non-members welcome). The event will start at St John the Baptist, 47 Church St, Northcote, accessible from Onewa Rd or Church St, at 1pm. From there we will go on to Takapuna Methodist and St Joseph's Takapuna before ending at our church.

News & Announcements. This morning, we have the pleasure of baptising Peter & Michelle Brunton's little baby, Julia Ruth Brunton, another little sister for all the other brothers and sisters. Peter & Michelle, may Julia bring much joy into your home and may you receive much grace and wisdom from the Lord to bring her and all your children up in the fear,

knowledge and love of the Lord. And while we seek to do all that we can to that end, parents, let us never forget that any real spiritual work in the hearts of our children, or anywhere else for that matter, is by the Spirit of the Lord. So with everything else we do, let us pray for them daily.

### Palmerston North

Announcements. This morning, we rejoice with Nathaniel and Sharon Rade-maker and the wider family as Luana receives the sacrament of baptism.

From the Pastor. Our condolences to Margaret Johansen on the passing of Rowland this past week. We are thankful that Rowland's struggles are now over and he is with his Lord in glory.

### Pukekohe

2009 has already proven to be a pivotal year in the creation/evolution debate. It's the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his book *The Origin of Species*. Evolutionists have been busy with special events, including feature films, TV documentaries, world-travelling exhibitions, tall-ship re-enactments of the HMS Beagle voyage, and much, much more. In response, Creation Ministries International, has produced a major international documentary film costing over \$1m. Structured around Darwin's famous *HMS Beagle* voyage, it features stunning wildlife photography, period re-enactments and interviews with leading authorities from around the world. This 52-minute documentary has been made to the highest production standards utilising media professionals so that it could be broadcast on general TV. It is intended to be a thoughtful exploration, a crossover product to seek to influence the "mainstream" to "think again" about Darwin. It is also a powerful tool that can "break down the barriers" of evolutionary prejudice, overcoming preconceived ideas about biblical creationists by its approach of being gentle and fair without com-promising truth.

I am writing these pastoral notes from the Wonga Park Reformed Church which is hosting the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. Michael Flinn and I are representing our churches here and listening to all the discussions. It is a privilege to meet up with many of the pastors I know in the CRCA, including those who have served in New Zealand in times past. I've been able to have a good talk to

Bill Wiersma and Reinier Noppers. I am staying with Harriet's sister, Lois. Harriet's brother, Gerald van der Kolk, is also staying there. On Friday night I'll visit Harriet's parents and on Saturday will go to the Reformed Theological College to do our deputies work. On Sunday morning I will preach in the

South Barwon church in Geelong.

It was encouraging to see so many come to the funeral service of our brother Whare Phillips last Tuesday. Thank you for your support of the family. Please continue to keep Jackie and all the family in your prayers.

## Women's Presbyterial

### Wellington Presbytery, Palmerston North

The 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 was a glorious, sunny autumn day. Surely a blessing from the Lord, as many of us set out early from our homes all over the lower North Island to arrive in PN by 9.30 am. It was for our yearly gathering of the women of the Reformed Churches of our Presbytery.

It had been a while since breakfast, and a hot drink and treats, were timely, and enjoyed as we met with friends and acquaintances from near and far.

Encouraging one another was the theme of our learning for the day, ably led by Rev. Peter Reynolds. His address was based on the Scripture passage 2 Peter 1:1-11 where Peter enjoins us to add to our faith good qualities in increasing measure. This will keep us from being ineffective, and unproductive in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are forgiven sinners ... a glorious future awaits us. To encourage the despairing, troubled and weary en route to glory, we need to respond with compassion, gentleness and tenderness, as we would with a lost lamb. Stand with them in their need. The Scriptures alone bring the words of Holy Spirit counsel to bear on our lives. We had several questions to address in our group discussions, and then a general question and answer session.

Lunch was well provided with hot soup, of several varieties, buns, cakes, and fruit, and it seemed in no time, we were called to reassemble for the afternoon session.

We had the usual roll call, which confirmed the good attendance, and then sang the Presbyterial Anthem.

The offering for the Douma's amounted to \$760.

There were 2 electives after lunch.

Dealing with Conflict: led by Peter's wife Margaret, or, One anothering in the Marriage Relationship: led by Peter.

Both sessions were well attended and appreciated. All 3 sessions were put on DVD, and generously made available at \$1 each.

Our grateful thanks for all who so generously donated the food, and worked in the planning to make the day a delight. Thank you too to Wilma van der Kay, for being our Presenter, and guiding us through the program so capably.

Thank you for your wonderful work, Sarah and Dalena deVries, and your team of helpers for preparing and serving the food, and washing the dishes, and tidying up at the conclusion.

There was a request for the recipe of the broccoli soup. Here it is, for those who would like to give it a try:

#### Broccoli Soup.

Sauté 1-4 heads broccoli in 2-3 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle 1/2cup flour over and mix. Add 2 litres chicken stock liquid, stirring as you go, and bring to the boil. Season with salt and pepper. Use stick blender to make a creamy texture. Just before serving, add 1 small tin reduced cream. Enjoy.

**Elizabeth Mulholland**  
Wanganui



## CBI NEW ZEALAND MARCH 2009

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We are well into 2009 as we begin the 4<sup>th</sup> year of C.B.I. in New Zealand. Statistics this month show the total NZ prison population at nearly 8,200. In the past 3 years, CBI has touched the lives of more than 500 prisoners, many of whom have been released. We pray that as seeds have been planted, they may grow and flourish in good soil bearing spiritual fruit to the glory of our Lord.

I received some interesting comparative statistics from CBI in Australia. In 2008 the number of completed lessons for Australia was 1397, the Solomons 1700, Fiji 863 and NZ 1053. In 2008 the number of enrolments for Australia was 396, the Solomons 96, Fiji 57 and NZ 220.

An Instructor Training session was held in January in Palmerston North. More are scheduled for different parts of NZ in the next few months.

In March, an Instructors meeting was held in Hastings. It was a wonderful opportunity to encourage each other in this ministry, sharing resources and ideas of how we can be most effective to support the students in the study of God's Word.

On March 6<sup>th</sup> we took part in one of our regular conference calls together with the U.S. and Australia. Among other things we discussed the CBI FM

Crossroad Connection Radio Programs. These 15 min. programs are being aired on Radio Kidnappers on every second Thursday at 5pm and repeated every second Sunday at 10pm. Lord willing we will have the funding this year to also play these programs in the South Island.

It was very heartening to receive a letter of sincere thanks and appreciation from the chaplaincy team at Rimutaka Prison, acknowledging the work of CBI and its contribution to change and enhance the lives of many of the men. "Your assistance over this past year has meant so much to us, knowing that we do not labour alone, and to the men amongst whom we minister." On reflection, 2008 was a challenging year, yet one that undoubtedly has borne much fruit. CBI is a wonderful way to introduce men and women to the Bible. It is achievable and the work is returned promptly and with encouraging letters.

I would like to share some of the many notes we receive from the students expressing their thanks and appreciation for the CBI studies.

*"I just want to thank Crossroads and the Lord Jesus Christ for giving me the courage, wisdom and understanding of what I have learnt this far in my journey. May God bless you all."*

*"Praise God for CBI as I wouldn't be where I am today had the staff not answered God's calling on their lives."*

*"Thank you for all your prayers and kind letters of encouragement helping me find peace in God's Good News."*

*"I would like to thank the Lord for these studies and pray that He bless all those involved in CBI. Keep up your good work."*

*"I would like to take this time to thank all of CBI for all their support with my studies. I really look forward to doing them. Thank you all so much."*

*"I would like to thank you all for praying for me. I really enjoy the study and the teachings I have studied so far. It's also giving me hope, knowing that I can fully put my trust in the Lord. He has been guiding me right throughout my journey in prison. He has taught me so much in ways that are so awesome and fulfilling. I've changed so much. I'm learning new things and God is bringing me ever closer to Himself. It is just such a pleasure to have God in my life. He*

*is the one I look up to. God bless you and thank you."*

*This student just completed the first Course – Great Truths of the Bible and shares, "I am so blessed to have completed my study. It was awesome. Thank you so much. I have fully enjoyed the time in studying God's Word. It's given me the hope to keep building a strong solid relationship with Jesus. Bless you."*

*"Thank you Crossroad for always being there for me and so prompt in returning my studies. I have, through your help and dedication and the Lord's love, learnt and grown so much. Bless you all."*

*"I have been reading the Bible, a few verses each night to learn more about our Father and myself as well. Thank you for the Bible. God bless."*

The following response is from a student after completing GTB Lesson 9, which deals with relationships. "This has been a tremendous and helpful and insightful study. I have got a lot out of it. A lot of this I can also put into daily practise/life here (in prison). Thank you." This student also shared in this lesson: "I have a God given responsibility to a God given marriage and family. If change is to be implemented it starts with me. The buck stops here! Colossians 3:23, I am committed to this and pray often for it. I am not waiting until I get home. It starts right now as my family visits each fortnight. It is not easy but as I and we work through this God is really blessing us as a family."

*"To CBI Instructors: Your letters are so inspiring and uplifting for me. I give great praise to God for you all. I always look forward to receiving mail from you and sometimes share your special words with other Christian brothers. Thank you for all your encouragement. I feel so blessed to have your support. May God bless you all."*

Several students have shared how much doing the lessons has not only helped them understand more of God's Word but also helped them with improving their English. English is a second language for a number of CBI students. They have to work hard and put in much effort reading Scripture and answering the questions. "I am learning from God's Words to make myself to understanding every lesson and make my English reading better and better from your help. Thank you."

A student shares about situations which pressure him to disobey God: *"In prison we are surrounded by men with limited vocabulary who as a habit use foul and obscene language. This is very hard to ignore and there is a constant battle within yourself to not swear. I've talked to a number of Christian brothers in here about it and we are all faced with the dilemma. Most of us confess our sins in prayer, but we must try to stand firm."*

A student relates about the time he first came to trust Jesus to forgive him for disobeying God. "I remember times in my life when I disobeyed God or turned from Him to follow the ways of man – the gay life style. I was trying to find love in the wrong places. Sex and lust is not love. God is love – confess, repent and forsake and be forgiven."

A student describing a time when God preserved him, even though he deserved the opposite. *"It was just after I was arrested while I was on remand that I was facing preventative detention and I was suicidal. God showed me He had a better plan for me. He had forgiven me for what I had done. However I had not forgiven myself. Jesus lifted me out of the dark pit and my life hasn't been the same since. The Lord is my Protector and Provider."*

A student shares of a time she was desperate and turned to God: "In jail I had lost everything. I was too ashamed to let my family know where I was. My husband was in jail as well. I had no one to turn to. I was even angry and disappointed with God, church groups, everybody. Finally I hit the bottom of the pit with self pity. I had to look up to God and ask for forgiveness and help."

*A student shares her reflections about her bondage to sin and how the Lord reached into her life. "After being sexually abused in the church by the youth leader (I was only 8) I had mixed feelings about God and Christians. Later on in life I was raped by two more church leaders. As soon as I could leave for college I left the church. I went into sports to fill the gap. I ended up marrying an atheist at the age of 22. He taught me the party life and would not let me see anybody from church. All good until my second daughter was still born – that's when I realised God is in control of everything."*

A student shares, "Dear CBI Crew, I had a wonderful graduation for the Sycamore Tree Programme (Christian based restora-

tive justice programme). It was awesome. Words cannot say how I truly felt during the programme. Something that I highly recommend for others. The greater insight of how victims feel who have had crime done to them. It's taken me 35 years to get to where I am now and I thank Jesus."

When asked if he ever turned to God when he was desperate, a student shares: *"Yes I have indeed! Coming into a new town from hitching, don't know anyone at all, on the streets, no home, nothing. Come into a crime first time ever, get caught by police, slammed in a prison first time, on remand, get time for this crime – 3 years. Come out of a relationship of 11 years. Yes I have been broken and desperate too!"*

These are the prayer requests from a student. "Please pray for our church in here (prison). We have changed over half the unit (inmates transferred) and church has gone from around 20 to 6. Praise God for 6 believers!! Pray the other 14 will continue in God's path and be a witness for Him. Pray for strength for me

to stand up for Christ amongst what has become a bit of a rough, tough mob in here. Pray for CBI to go from strength to strength in here as it continues God's work. You have no idea **the difference God is making in this prison through His CBI ministry."**

Please continue to pray for:

- Those in prison
- CBI students and their families
- Chaplains
- CBI Instructors
- Ministry of CBI in the prisons and those involved with the work of CBI in NZ.

Let us also give praise and thanks to our Lord for the love and grace He has shown to many in the prisons.

If you would like further information about the CBI ministry you can contact us on [CBI.NZ@clear.net.nz](mailto:CBI.NZ@clear.net.nz) or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4158.



**"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Luke 10:2**

*Photo: Paul Davey*

# “The story around the shipping container TRLU 3612795”

In 2007 the National Diaconate Committee (NDC) was offered a number of used and redundant hospital beds through the agency of one of our church members. Enquiries with the CRCA Solomons Workgroup in Missions (SWIM)



The Container TRLU 3612795

determined they could be used in the Solomon Islands (SI) where a hospital had been a recent casualty of a tsunami. The diaconates in the Wellington Presbytery were presented with the challenge to get these beds to the Solomon Islands. In due time they sent a shipping container carrying the beds and lots of other needed items including medical supplies, equipment and clothing.

In 2008 NDC heard that a similar batch of beds would be coming available in Auckland. These too could be put to good use in SI so we offered to find a good home for them. This time we asked the diaconates of the Auckland Presbytery to be responsible for the shipping. The beds became available on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and with the help of church members NDC took delivery the next day, placing them in storage.

A call from SWIM told of a need for a dentist's chair, a doctor's examination table, maternity beds and mattresses.

Meanwhile plans were developing for a member of the Wellington Church to be sent by her church to the Solomon Islands to establish a disability centre under the auspices of SWIM. Equipment and resources were needed for the centre and the churches were busy gathering such. This too could travel in the container.

Under God's providence, donated equipment, 4.8 tonnes of it, was assembled, packed and sent off in Container TRLU 3612795 after a prayerful commissioning by NDC representatives. The

container began its journey on 22<sup>nd</sup> April with Solomons ETA 20<sup>th</sup> May.

## What has been sent in the container?

Bound for the hospital at Malu'u on the northern tip of the Island of Malaita are the 3 birthing beds and several of the 16 hospital beds and mattresses. Together these comprised the major portion of the weight and space in the container.

Almost all the rest of the cargo is consigned to the Bethesda Disability Centre near Henderson, the Honiara airport. 5 wheelchairs, 2 patient hoists, numerous walking sticks and crutches, 24 bed mattresses, OT and rehabilitation aids, office equipment including chairs and filing cabinet, 3 portable typewriters, 2 manual sewing machines, kitchen utensils, handyman tools and more.

Of a general nature and for distribution are bundles of linen, bags and boxes of clothes.

Our prayer is that, in the hands of God's servants, these many bits and pieces may be used to declare the excellencies of our glorious God and His Christ who died on Calvary's Cross, a death sealed by resurrection.

Our story starts with a container TRLU 3612795 and especially its contents. That story will be complete with the unloading in Honiara. However that will only begin perhaps a 100 or a 1000 stories as each piece of equipment or article is put to use in God's service.

**Carl Larsen**



All 19 hospital beds stowed



Chairs: 5 wheel, 5 utility, 1 office, filing cabinet



One more mattress then full

## Missions in focus

by Susan Larsen (Reformed Church of Wellington)

We watched as Philip painstakingly lifted himself from his wheelchair down onto the top step leading from his house, and then shuffled on his backside from one step to the next to reach the bottom step. Philip is now a paraplegic as a result of the disease he has had for the last 17 years. Although he had a wheelchair, there was no ramp leading to his leaf house, so it was a real effort for him to get about.

Philip's village on the island of Malaita, Solomon Islands, is made up of leaf houses – made of wood from the bush, with walls and roofs made of palm branches folded over bamboo sticks, sewn together with vines. Each family has a kitchen leaf house. This consists of a dirt floor with wooden shelving made from bush materials, a small fire and a *motu oven* (hot rocks placed on ground, in which a fire is made, and food wrapped in banana leaves and placed over the fire to cook). There is no water on tap in many of the village houses (water is collected from a communal pump – bore or spring water), no electricity (just a kerosene lamp and torches for night light), no toilet and no shower.

### No infrastructure

Philip's daily personal care consists of wheeling as close to the sea as possible, then hauling himself over the rocks to get to the sea for a wash. This is life for 80% of Solomon Islanders – in a country composed of over 900 islands (although most live in the 6 main islands), the remoteness of the villages makes life as we know it impossible. The villagers or the nation do not have the economy or infrastructure for running water, electricity, etc.

This was just one of the many eye-opening experiences I encountered during a short-term mission trip to the Solomon Islands in August 2008. I spent the time visiting SWIM ("Short Workshops in Mission"), looking into the possibility of whether, as an Occupational Therapist, I could contribute in some meaningful way to the plans they have for establishing a Christian Disability Centre.

### Occupational Therapist

My name is Susan Larsen, and I am a member of the Reformed Church of Wellington. I was born in Newcastle, Australia, in 1965, where my father, Rev

Carl Larsen, was serving at the time as minister of the Reformed Church. Our family subsequently shifted to Tokoroa, New Zealand, and then to Dunedin, where I attended high school. In 1987 I commenced 3 years of training as an Occupational Therapist and I have been working in that profession for the past 20 years. My work has been in a variety of settings – initially based at Waikato Hospital, and then as a Community OT visiting people with disabilities in their home environment throughout the Waikato. This was followed by two years in a vocational service in Te Awamutu – supporting people with disabilities to find and successfully remain in employment. In 1999 I shifted to Geelong, Australia, where I attended the Reformed Theological College and obtained a Diploma in Theology. I then worked for a year as a Case Manager at Disability Client Services, and in the Stroke Ward of Grace McKellar Hospital. Over the past 8 years, I have provided Community Occupational Therapy assistance to clients through the District Health Board in Lower Hutt, and served as Team Leader for that team for the last 4 years.

### Assisting people with disabilities

The Christian Reformed Church of Australia supports the SWIM mission in the

Solomon Islands. Rev Kevin and Mrs Machi Rietveld work as missionaries at SWIM, based approximately 15 minutes from Honiara, the capital. For 3 or 4 years now the mission has, along with the opportunities for short term mission work and theological teaching that they provide, been supporting and assisting people with disabilities – such as Philip. This support has been in the form of: constructing ramps or new cottages for those using wheelchairs; installing septic tank toilets/showers/rain water tanks by their homes; providing food hampers, wheelchairs and transport; supplying them with seeds to enable them to plant their own vegetable gardens etc. SWIM has also developed good working relationships with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health (in particular Community Based Rehabilitation), a disabled persons' advocacy group, and other agencies working in the disability sector. In 2006 SWIM were invited to apply for some funding to assist those with disabilities in a more meaningful and ongoing way. It had been identified that there was a real need to assist such people to develop their abilities and to train and support them towards greater participation and independence in home and community life. A proposal for the establishment of a training and support centre was submitted and funding was



*Building progress at Bethesda Centre*

granted. A site for the Bethesda Disability Training and Support Centre was subsequently purchased and initial site development, planting of gardens, and construction of some of the buildings, is currently underway.

The purpose of the Centre will be to provide 10-week residential courses for people with disabilities and their carers. The Centre will be run on Christian principles, with a Christian ethos underlying all activities. It will be a unique opportunity to demonstrate the love and compassion of Christ to people with disabilities – coming alongside them in their need – and to use openings to present the Gospel to those attending the Centre.

### **Spiritual needs catered for**

The Centre will also utilise the principles of Occupational Therapy – using meaningful activities to provide training and education opportunities for people with disabilities and their carers, and supporting them to arrive at solutions to the challenges of their disability and living situation. They will be supported to maximise their level of participation and independence in the areas of personal care tasks, domestic activities, subsistence living/vocational skills (e.g. gardening, animal husbandry), leisure/craft activities (e.g. woodcarving and

simple metal work, traditional weaving) etc. The spiritual needs of those attending the Centre will be catered for with daily devotional and prayer time, Bible study, Sunday worship and counselling. Local Solomon Island staff will be employed and trained in working with people with disabilities, a resource library established, and disability advocacy and networking with other disability/government/NGO agencies will be facilitated. It is hoped that a degree of self-sufficiency for the Centre will be achieved through the sale of extra garden produce and eggs etc.

The long-term goal of Bethesda is for local ownership of the Centre by the Solomon Island people. This is essential in any work in a developing country, to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the project. A Honiara-based Advisory Board has been established with this in mind.

### **Opportunity for the Gospel**

It became very apparent to me during my time in the Solomon Islands that there is a real need in the country for facilities such as the proposed Bethesda Disability Training and Support Centre. Apart from Government health services such as hospitals and clinics, and Community Based Rehabilitation (government health workers who visit disabled people in their own homes), and a number of facilities for people who are blind or deaf, and schools for children with disabilities, there are no other vocational or training facilities for adults with disabilities. I was challenged by the needs of disabled people in the Solomon Islands, and more especially that these be met in a biblical, Reformed way – looking at the whole person, spiritually and emotionally as well as their physical needs. The proposed

*Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you!* If you or somebody you know is planning a mission trip – short or long – please let us know. We want to pray for those on mission trips overseas, but we cannot pray if we don't know that you're going! Deadline for submission of articles to Faith in Focus is 6 weeks before the month the magazine comes to your church. If you would like our congregations to pray for you on your mission trip, send details to Janice at [reid4radio@gmail.com](mailto:reid4radio@gmail.com)

Centre could be an added witness to the way Christians care for people with disabilities, and an opportunity to bring the Gospel to those it seeks to help.

### **Off to the Solomons**

Since the time of my visit to the Solomon Islands, I have been invited by SWIM to work in a missionary capacity as a Program Advisor at Bethesda, assisting in the establishment of the Centre. The Session of the Reformed Church of Wellington have subsequently endorsed my involvement in this work and have pledged to support me in this venture, with a Commissioning Service planned in July 2009. I hope to leave for the Solomon Islands at the end of August, initially for a 17-month stint. I have been blown away by the way in which God has opened so many doors and provided me with so much support from members of Reformed Churches in the Wellington and Auckland Presbyteries in my preparations for this work. However, I would be grateful for your continued prayers as I embark on what will be an exciting but challenging step in faith, as 'unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain'.



Village kitchen



Ramp supplied by SWIM funds



Village flower garden